

**IN THE ABSTRACT:**

Please replace the present abstract with the following new abstract:

**Abstract**

A catalyst support is produce by mixing particulate synthetic silica with 0.5 - 10 parts by weight of one or more particulate oxides or phosphates of the elements of group IIA, IIIB, IVB, VA, VIB, VIIB, VIII, IB, IIB, IIIA, IVA and lanthanides or precursors thereof, shaping the mixture and then calcining the shaped mixture to form the finished support. The formed support has improved stability relative to aging resistance under hydrothermal conditions. The catalyst support is used together with phosphoric acid in the production of alcohols from olefins by hydration. The resultant hydration catalysts have excellent activity and selectivity.